



North Central London
Joint Formulary Committee

Rubefacients (excluding topical NSAIDs) Position Statement

Rubefacients (exc. topical NSAIDs) are non-formulary in North Central London.

Prescribers should not initiate rubefacients for any new patients.

Patients established on rubefacients should be reviewed with a view to having these stopped; alternative analgesic agents may be prescribed if clinically indicated.

NHS England category: Item of low clinical effectiveness, where there is a lack of robust evidence of clinical effectiveness or there are significant safety concerns.

- Rubefacients are topical preparations that cause irritation and reddening of the skin due to increased blood flow.
- Topical rubefacient preparations are used to provide pain relief in soft tissue disorders. Relief is provided through a counter-irritation mechanism. Preparations often contain nicotinate, salicylate, essential oils and camphor.
- Topical rubefacient use in chronic musculoskeletal pain is not supported by evidence. Specifically, recent trials of salicylate-containing preparations found this intervention not to be effective.
- Patients who want to continue using rubefacients can be advised that these can be purchased OTC in the pharmacy.
- PrescQIPP has made available a patient information leaflet explaining why rubefacients (exc. topical NSAIDs) will no longer be prescribed [[link](#)]

Groups / Individuals who have overseen the development of this guidance:	Joint Formulary Support
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